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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



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**GATEKEEPER
PROGRAM**

Community support for the elderly

**Your Employees
Can Help Open
The Gates To
Community Support
For The Elderly.**

Introducing the Gatekeeper Program.

The Gatekeeper Program is designed to assist vulnerable older people who need help but may be unable to get it for themselves.

Each year, our elderly population grows. In fact, people over 85 make up the fastest growing segment of our population.

Many of them are healthy, active people involved with family and friends, church or community groups. But many others are not so fortunate. They live alone and have little contact with others. If they become ill or unable to function independently, they can easily go unnoticed and unattended.

Almost any employee with public contact can be a Gatekeeper.

The Gatekeeper Program seeks to remedy the problem by enlisting the help of people who may have contact with the elderly in the normal course of their jobs. These might be supermarket clerks, bank tellers, pharmacists, utility meter readers, customer service representatives, waitresses, waiters, mail carriers, and paper deliverers—the list is virtually endless.

These are the Gatekeepers who can help open the gates between vulnerable older people and the social service agencies that can help them. All a Gatekeeper needs to do is learn to recognize certain danger signals in the elderly—a change in appearance or behavior, signs of confusion or disability. Then, by making one phone call, they can get assistance before a crisis occurs.

A single phone call can save a life.

Most states have established “one-stop” assistance for the elderly. Consequently, by calling a local number, you’ll reach your Senior Information and Assistance office. And they’ll take it from there. They contact the elderly person, assess their needs, and get whatever help is required from the appropriate health or social service organization. This may include medical care, food preparation or delivery, help with household chores, transportation, or other services.

The program’s rewards are far reaching.

The Gatekeeper Program can—and has—saved lives. At the very least, it gives older people a new lease on life by enabling them to maintain their dignity and independence.

But its rewards are even more far reaching than that. Making this kind of commitment to help others builds employee job satisfaction and pride. It has a highly positive impact in the community too because it increases employee community involvement.

It’s easy to implement at almost no cost.

You can put the Gatekeeper Program into action with very little input of time or money. No additional staff or resources are needed.

It’s all accomplished by existing employees, in the normal course of doing their jobs.

Employees can be trained as Gatekeepers in less than an hour. They’re not expected to be social workers or counselors. And they don’t need to know a lot of details about senior programs and services. They need only know what danger signs to look for and what telephone number to call for assistance.

Everything you need for employee training and program implementation is available in a Gatekeeper start-up kit.

It contains a 15-minute videotape that shows how the program works; a manual with guidelines to implement the program and maintain enthusiasm for it; a quick reference guide for employee Gatekeepers; and a variety of artwork for duplication.

The Gatekeeper start-up kit is available on a loan basis at no cost from your state office on aging. You may duplicate any or all of the materials before returning them. Or, if you prefer, you may purchase one or more kits from the National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA).

**For more information,
call the Illinois Department
on Aging's**

**Senior HelpLine:
1 800 252-8966
(Voice and TTY)**



Community support for the elderly

The Gatekeeper Program works.

Without it a lot of our vulnerable elderly would never get the attention or assistance they need. Here are a few comments from Gatekeepers who know:

"I talked to an elderly man who mailed his monthly payment in cash and I asked if he could send a check instead. He said he didn't have a checking account and couldn't go to a pay station because he is handicapped. So I called Senior Information and Assistance. They arranged transportation for him to get groceries and to pay his bills on a regular basis. We have a very satisfied customer."



"The elderly have so much pride, and they are used to providing for themselves without asking for any help. We really need to listen and pick up on things that could be warning signs. We may be the only chance for an older person to get the help they need."



"A customer called and said she didn't have enough money to pay her bill or buy food. I checked with Senior Information and Assistance. They already knew about this person but are now giving her additional help. It's such a relief to have the Gatekeeper Program and to know we can turn to Senior Information and Assistance."



"As I was delivering papers, I found an older man who couldn't remember his address or even why he was outside. He said that his heater wasn't working, and that he lived alone with his cat. I notified Senior Information and Assistance. The man has now moved in with his daughter, who had not realized how vulnerable he'd become."



"Before the Gatekeeper Program, I felt badly because I could see many elderly customers had serious problems, and I couldn't really help. The time we can spend with each customer is limited; we're not social workers. But now I know how to refer these problems to people who can help."

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**The Illinois
Department on Aging
(217) 785-3390**

**Senior HelpLine:
1 800 252-8966
(Voice and TTY)**

For more information on the Gatekeeper Program or for implementation materials, contact the your state office on aging or write to:

**GATEKEEPER PROGRAM
NASUA**

600 Maryland Avenue S.W., #208
Washington, D.C. 20024

A joint effort between the Washington State Bureau of Aging and Adult Services and Puget Sound Power & Light Company under a federal Administration on Aging grant #1260-52439.

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal Statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have a right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department on Aging. For information, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (Voice & TTY).